



THE CALIFORNIA AGGIE

Bill Lockyer speaks about UC and state budget in 2008

By Thuy Tran
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California State Treasurer Bill Lockyer spoke in the AGR room at noon Wednesday about UC and state budgets in 2008.

Lockyer has served for 25 years in the California State Legislature and has served two terms as California attorney general, said Alan Olmstead, UCD professor of economics and Director of the Institute of Governmental Affairs.

"Few state leaders rival Mr. Lockyer's experience with an understanding of a broad range of issues," he said.

Lockyer began his speech, "A Look at the UC Budget and the State's Fiscal Picture in 2008," by discussing a few of his roles and responsibilities as the California state treasurer.

"When you're the treasurer for the state of California, no one knows you exist," Lockyer said. "You look for opportunities to get constructive public debates going because of your role."

As treasurer, he said, one of his annual obligations is to publish the Debt Affordability Report.

According to treasurer.ca.gov, the Debt Affordability Report provides an in-depth look at how much investment California needs, how much it could cost to finance that investment, and what our state can do to make it affordable.

Lockyer said this year, he hopes a more public policy will be produced.

Another part of his role is to look at budget trends in the state of California and anticipate continued growth and spending, he said.

In response to questions about how he could predict 20 years ahead, Lockyer said all that could be relied upon were trends.

Lockyer then spoke about budgets for education systems in California.

When the public was asked what they would pay more tax for, a slight majority said they'd pay for prison, some say K-12 education, and 50 percent say yes to higher education while 48 percent say no, Lockyer said.

"[K-12 education] really isn't supported by the general public in the kind of degree that seems to be deserved or merited," he said.

Lockyer also spoke about energy expenditure in California and how he proposes to create instant energy savings.

The state government is California's largest building owner, he said, and by creating changes such as better insulation in the buildings, a lot of energy could be saved.

After his speech, Lockyer held a brief Q-and-A session.

One audience member asked if all the proposed items, such as improved education systems, could really be conceived without tax increases.

Lockyer responded that it couldn't.

"I don't know how we fix these big systems without additional resources," he said.

Lockyer said what really worried him was the problems that couldn't be solved even with more resources.

"Particularly with K-12 [education systems], I don't think it's resources," he said. "I think maybe a more profound problem is whatever is happening at home, and I don't know what we can do about that."

After answering a few more questions, Lockyer ended the session by encouraging the audience to be advocates on behalf of the [UC] system's needs.

"I'm an advocate for capping and reducing fees, but people have to work really hard to get policy-makers to do that," he said. "Writing letters to legislators and visiting offices is the only way I know to get that to happen."

For any proposal, Lockyer said, what one should do is to contact his or her assembly and senate member.